

1816  
THE  
SALVATION OF MEN,

THE  
DESIRE AND PRAYER OF EVERY FAITHFUL  
MINISTER.

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A  
SERMON,

PREACHED

*At Winterslow, Wilts,*

APRIL 17, 1797.

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By WILLIAM STEADMAN.

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"WE SEEK NOT YOUR'S, BUT YOU."

PAUL.

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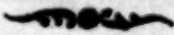
# SALVATION OF MEN

MINISTERS



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## *Advertisement.*



**AS** Village Preaching has of late pretty much engaged the attention of Ministers of different denominations, and been always approved of, and as much as possible practised, by the author of the following Sermon, he apprehended it might serve to forward that work, were the objects and views of those who engaged in it fully explained. This was his leading motive for delivering the discourse at first, and is that which induces him now to offer it to the public.

As few of those who heard it delivered are raised above the rank of Day Labourers, and as it is published principally with a view to circulate amongst the lower classes, and on that account sold at a reduced price, the reader of superior rank, into whose hands it may accidentally fall, will not expect to be gratified with eloquence of language, as he must well know that would effectually defeat its object. If just and important sentiment be delivered in a way

calculated to instruct the poor and illiterate, the author's aim will be accomplished; and if divine blessing attend it, to the awakening of a serious attention to their immortal interests his prayers will be answered.

**BROUGHTON, HANTS,**

**May 8, 1797.**

**W. S.**

**A SER.**



## A SERMON.

ROM. xxi. Brethren, my Heart's Desire and Prayer to  
God for Israël is, that they might be saved.

It is a common thing for people to be very much surprized at the pains which some Ministers take to preach in places around them; and at the earnestness and plainness which they discover in their addresses. And as the true reason of this diligence and earnestness often escapes their notice, so they are frequently employed in forming strange conjectures respecting the end they have in view. Sometimes they imagine they do it for gain, and at other times for applause. And the earnestness and plainness with which they speak to them about their souls, is frequently imputed to the want of good-will; and, accordingly, provokes their resentment.

However disagreeable and painful this may be, yet, to a wise and faithful Minister of the Gospel, it is no very great matter of surprize; for when he reads his Bible he is informed, that almost all the faithful Ministers of the Gospel, yea and almost all the Prophets, met with similar, or worse treatment.

Amongst the most eminent Ministers in the first age of Christianity, the Apostle Paul holds a distinguished rank, and, accordingly, he met with great opposition; frequently, indeed, from the Heathen; but more especially from his own countrymen, the Jews; as you, who have read the history of him, in the New Testament, well know.

But as he was conscious that his views in what he did were directly the reverse of what many imagined, so he often takes occasion expressly to avow them. He does so in the words of my text. He had been under the necessity of asserting, in his writings, as well as in his preaching, and particularly in this Epistle, many things which he knew the Jews would greatly dislike : such as these : — That they as well as the Gentiles, were all under sin : — That they, as well as the Gentiles, must be justified and saved by the grace of God, and the merits of Jesus Christ, and not by their own works : — That, notwithstanding their great opportunities of information, they almost all laboured under a most fatal mistake as to this matter ; and that it appeared, even from their own Scriptures, that God had in awful displeasure, tho' in strict justice, and infinite wisdom, seen fit to leave the main body of them in that state, and to call the greatest number of his people from amongst the Gentiles, a people whom they despised, and who they thought would have no share at all in the privileges of the Messiah's kingdom. Well knowing their prejudices, and from thence concluding that they might have some plausible pretence for insinuating that he disliked and hated them, and of course took a pleasure in saying these hard things of them, he takes an opportunity of expressly declaring the contrary, and assuring them, that whatever they might think of him, he had the most tender affection for them, and the strongest possible concern for their welfare, and that all he did, and all he said, as far as it related to them, even when he might appear to reflect upon them the most severely, was with a view to promote it. Indeed he had given them the strongest assurances of this before, particularly in the beginning of the sixth chapter, where he uses expressions on this subject too forcible to be easily explained ;

plained ; and repeats the assertion in my text — Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. This was the great object he wished to see accomplished. This he desired from the bottom of his heart. This he made the constant matter of his prayer ; as well knowing, that if it be accomplished at all, it must be God who effected it. He had this concern for men in general, but more especially for *Israel*, i. e. the Jewish nation ; and that because they were his brethren, his kinsmen, according to the flesh ; and had been peculiarly indulged with religious privileges ; having had the Word and worship of God confined to them for ages, before the coming of Christ ; and had his personal Ministry, and the first preaching of the Apostles amongst them.

Now permit me, Brethren, to say, that every Minister should, and every good Minister does, make that his object which Paul made his, and use such means for its accomplishment as he used, and feel that anxiety for their success which he felt. Salvation is of as much importance now as it was then ; and should, of course, call forth the same desires and prayers in Ministers, on the behalf of those that hear them, or who may hear them if they would, as it did in Paul. And as the consideration of this subject may answer some valuable ends, give me leave to devote this opportunity to it. Here then permit me

I. To shew you that the desire and prayer of Ministers should be, that men might be saved.

II. To point out the way in which this desire is made manifest, and this prayer proved to be sincere.

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III. To mention some things which may enable them to conclude, that their wishes and prayers are in any instances accomplished.

I. Let me shew you that the hearts desire and prayer of every Minister of the Gospel should be, that men in general, and more especially those who either may or do hear the Gospel, might be saved.

To explain what Salvation is here intended, or to manifest that it is the business of Preachers to be conversant about it, would be little better than a waste of time, as they are matters sufficiently obvious. — What, therefore, I aim at, under this head, is to shew, That the Salvation of men, especially those who are surrounded by Gospel privileges, is of such great importance as to demand such earnestness, and to compel every one that deserves the name of a Minister of the Gospel to say, with Paul, My heart's desire and prayer to God for mankind, for my neighbours, for my hearers, is, that they might be saved ! And oh that I may be indulged with a portion of that Spirit with which Paul was endowed, and be enabled so to speak as to inflame my own heart with the desire of which I am speaking, and to stir you all up, whilst you hear of the propriety and necessity of seeking the Salvation of others, effectually to fall in love with your own !

And here you will excuse me if I take it for granted, that every good Minister of Jesus Christ is a sincere lover of Christ and of immortal souls. These dispositions constitute the ground-work of the desire and prayer of which I speak. Where these are wanting, the most powerful arguments will not prevail ; but where they predominate,

arguments



arguments the most persuasive spring from every consideration relative to the great subject of Salvation. — As for instance :

1. The great *blessedness* of those who are saved. — And this who can describe? Who can fully conceive of it? Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive of, the things that God hath prepared for his saved ones. All their sins are forgiven them; the great God of Heaven and Earth accepts them, loves them, rejoices over them to do them good, preserves them in all their dangers, comforts them in all their distresses, assists them in all the duties of life, supports them in the agonies of death, and makes them happy with his presence and favour for ever! All the blessedness which the eternal love of God can suggest, which the mediation of Christ can procure, which the promises of the Gospel can set forth, which the glorified Soul can enjoy, and which the fulness of Jehovah can impart—All! All is included in Salvation!

Of this blessedness every soul, however sunk in sin and ignorance, however poor and despised, however oppressed and afflicted, is capable. To the enjoyment of this felicity every individual that hears the Gospel, however vile by Nature, and abominable by Practice; however enslaved by the Devil, or rushing on with speed towards Hell, is invited!

Can it then be imagined, that those who know the value, and have tasted the delights of this infinitely glorious Salvation: who are satisfied of your capacity of enjoying it, and who realize the hearty welcome to partici-

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pate of it, which its great and generous Author gives—can it, I say, be imagined they should be indifferent whether you possess it or not ?

Surely those Ministers, who can be indifferent to such a consideration as this, give strong presumptive evidence, that they have formed very mean ideas of the elevation and bliss to which Salvation exalts its happy subjects, or else have but a small degree of benevolence towards their fellow men. And those hearers who think a Minister takes too much pains, or uses too much earnestness, on this subject, must never have thought how blessed those are who obtain Salvation.

2. The *misery* that awaits all those who miss of Salvation is another very weighty consideration. This it is true is but seldom thought of by the generality of people; but is what the Scriptures largely insist on. All who have not their sins pardoned, and their souls renewed and sanctified, are exposed to the wrath of God, and must dwell for ever in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone. As this is a doctrine which men in general disregard, if not contradict, let me lay before you some Scripture testimonies in confirmation of it. “ God is angry  
“ with the wicked every day.” He shall rain upon the  
“ wicked snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible  
“ tempest.”<sup>2</sup> The wicked is like the troubled sea, which  
“ cannot rest ; there is no peace saith my God to the  
“ wicked.”<sup>3</sup> The sinners in Zion are afraid ; fearfulness  
“ hath surprized the hypocrite. Who amongst us shall  
“ dwell with devouring fire ? Who amongst us shall  
“ dwell with everlasting burnings ?”<sup>4</sup> The wicked shall  
“ be turned into Hell, and all the nations that forget  
“ God.



“ God.” He that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.” \* — These are a few of the many general representations of the woful state of those who miss of Salvation. But I must be a little more particular, and direct you to the Scripture account of their state in life, at death, at the day of Judgment, and to all eternity.

Being under the wrath of God in life, they cannot but be miserable. If possessed of riches and worldly ease, their prosperity proves a curse to them, as it only gives them an opportunity of being more extensively wicked. If poor and afflicted, they are destitute of any thing to support their minds, and driven, in many instances, to desperate measures for relief. Both the one and the other “treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath.”

But how dreadful must be their state at death! Forced from all they have here enjoyed and abused, dragged before the tribunal of God, like the rich man in the parable, in Hell they lift up their eyes, being in torments, seeing all the blessed afar off, happy in the full enjoyment of the divine favour, whilst they are tormented in the flames that know no abatement, and crying in vain for a drop of water to cool their tongues. — And how much more dreadful still their condition at the day of Judgment! — “Then Jesus Christ will come in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall then be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power!” He will indeed “come to be glorified in his Saints, and to be admired in all them that believe;” \* and will say to them,

“ Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world :” \* but will pronounce a very different sentence upon all the wicked : a sentence which will fill their souls with unutterable terror and anguish ; a sentence which they would rather be dashed in pieces by rocks and mountains than hear : — “ Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels !” † And oh ! to think of their woful state to *all* eternity ! Shut up in the prison of Hell, “ the lake that burns with fire and brimstone ;” “ Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched ;” ‡ Subject to the bitterest reproaches of their own consciences ; aggravated by the reproaches of those who were once their companions in sin, and whose ruin they helped to promote ; insulted by Devils, who once deluded them, and now take a malignant pleasure in tormenting them ; and above all, overwhelmed every moment, with the wrath of an Almighty God ! Terrible Situation !

And yet, terrible as it is, let me assure you, it is a situation to which all mankind are exposed ; and from which nothing but Salvation can deliver them ! It signifies nothing how rich, or how learned any of them may be ; or whatever religious privileges they might enjoy ; or whatever knowledge in religion they might acquire ; or however easy and confident they may be ; if they miss of Salvation, this will be their inevitable, dreadful doom.

Of this all true Ministers of the Gospel are sensible. Should they not, then, feel the utmost concern that men might be saved ? What would you think of that man who saw his neighbour's house on fire, and knew the family were asleep in it, and yet took no pains to awake them and save them from the flames ?

3. The

\* Matt. xxv. 34.

† Ver. 41.

‡ Rev. xxi. 8.

§ Mark ii. 44.

3. The Gospel, and all the means of Grace with which any are favoured, will not only be useless to them, but an aggravation of their misery, if they miss of Salvation.

And this is another very weighty consideration. The Gospel is indeed "the glorious Gospel of the blessed God;" \* it discovers glorious things, offers glorious blessings; and, where it is received, produces glorious effects. And how painful is the thought, that this Gospel should be thrown away upon any. To hear it, or to have it in one's power to hear it, is a very distinguishing privilege, a signal effect of the sovereign goodness of God.—Thousands and millions of our fellow creatures are without it; and how lamentable is it that this privilege should be unimproved, this favour imparted to us in vain! This Gospel is like the living waters mentioned in the xlviii chapter of Ezekiel, it carries life and healing wherever it comes; and alas! how painful to think that any should miss of its beneficial effects!

But this, though it be sufficiently lamentable, is not all. It were well if the Gospel were only thrown away upon them; it will be the means, through their perverseness and unbelief, of rendering their misery the more dreadful. To those who are saved it is indeed "the favour of life unto life, but to those who perish it will be the favour of death unto death;" † it will harden their hearts more; it will irritate their corruptions, and render them still more inexcusable; as well as expose them to fiercer wrath, and fill them with the most tormenting reflections in a future world! What else did our Saviour mean when he spake those awful words, "Woe unto thee Chorazin? Woe unto thee Bethsaida! for if the

"mighty

" mighty works which have been done in you had been  
 " done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented  
 " long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes ! For I say un-  
 " to you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon  
 " in the day of Judgment than for you ! And thou Ca-  
 " pernaum, which art exalted to Heaven, shall be brought  
 " down to Hell : for if the mighty works which have  
 " been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would  
 " have remained unto this day ! But I say unto you, it  
 " shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrhah in the  
 " day of Judgment than you ?" 6

The doom of Sodom at the day of Judgment will doubtless be sufficiently dreadful ; but the doom of Capernaum will, according to our Saviour's declaration, be more dreadful ; and that principally on this account, that its inhabitants heard the Gospel from Christ and his Apostles, and saw the miracles with which it was confirmed, and after all rejected it.

This should be another very awakening consideration to urge Ministers to long and pray, more especially, that those who attend the ministration of the Gospel, or who live within reach of it, may be saved ; otherwise their state will be worse than Heathens, worse than Sodom.

4. The honour and glory which Jesus Christ will receive from those who are saved, is another reason of this desire.

Jesus Christ hath richly deserved the glory he shall receive from the Salvation of men : whatever numbers

may



may be saved, they will no more than afford him a just recompence. He descended from Heaven, laid aside his glory, and dwelt amongst men. He spent a life of the most painful labours and sufferings, and died the shameful and painful death of the cross; enduring at the same time an agony of soul which none can fully describe. And for all this abasement and suffering, the effects of a love that passeth knowledge, he seeks his reward in the Salvation of sinners. And those who have felt the constraining influence of his love, as all good Ministers have done, cannot help longing for the speedy conferring of the reward upon him. They cannot bear to think of his being crucified afresh, and put to an open shame, which he is, when men disobey and reject his Gospel, and "judge themselves unworthy of everlasting life:" but they feel the greatest pleasure and exultation at his "seeing the travail of his soul, having a portion with the great, and dividing the spoil with the strong." This pleasure they experience when they see a sinner converted from the error of his ways, and "saved with an everlasting Salvation." Then they see fruit spring up, the seeds of which were sown in the dying agonies of their Saviour. Then they see a soul formed anew; formed to show forth the praises of him to whose matchless love they owe the Hope of their own Salvation; formed to make one of that innumerable happy company who shall "stand before the Throne, clothed with white robes, and having palms in their hands," casting their crowns at his feet, and "without intermission, exclaiming, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain!" Oh! how painful to think that, instead of this, any should be gnawing their tongues "for pain, and blaspheming the God of Heaven!"

The

\* Acts xiii. 46.

\* Isaiah liii. 11, 12.

\* Rev. vii. 9.

\* Rev. viii. 1.

5. The speedy approach of *Death*. This puts a period to all opportunities of obtaining Salvation. When Death comes men hear no more of pardon, of repentance, of faith, of the power and grace of a Redeemer ! No ! " these things that belong to their peace are then forever hid from their eyes,"<sup>3</sup> " The darkness is come upon them, and their feet have stumbled upon the dark mountains ; and if they look for light God hath turned it into darkness and the shadow of death, and made it gross darkness."<sup>4</sup>

And you need scarcely be told how extensively, how speedily, and unexpectedly Death extends its ravages. How constantly the young as well as the old ; the rich, the poor, the learned and the ignorant are falling a prey to it. Have you forgotten the number, that were swept away from this village by the fever and the small pox four or five years ago ?

Now if this does not directly assign the reason why Ministers should seek the Salvation of those around them, yet, when their Salvation appears from other considerations to be a matter of the last importance, it assigns a very substantial reason why they should be very importunate in praying for it, and diligent in doing all they can to promote it : Else " while they are busied here and there, men escape out of their hands,"<sup>5</sup> and they have no further opportunity of promoting their immortal interests.

Thus having shewn you some of the many important reasons why Ministers should make it their heart's desire and prayer that men should be saved, I proceed,

II. To



## II. To point out the proofs of their Sincerity herein.

And here let me observe to you in the first place, That this will discover itself by their labouring to convince their hearers of the infinite Worth of their Souls, and the unspeakable importance of their Salvation. Until men are made sensible of this, they will never be earnestly engaged in seeking Salvation: nor can much regard be expected to be paid to the Gospel which reveals it. All the great truths relating to it will be empty sounds to them. This, therefore, must be first attempted. In order to this, the doctrine contained in those very striking words of our Saviour, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his soul?"<sup>6</sup> must be insisted upon and proved. The consolation springing from pardon, and the terrors of a guilty conscience; the solemnities of death and Judgment; the joys of Heaven, and the horrors of Hell, together with the eternal duration of the one and the other, must be laid clearly and constantly before them.

2. They will further evidence it by labouring to convince them in particular, of their own lost and undone condition. They will assure them in the name, and by the direction of the Great God of Heaven and Earth, "that they are all guilty before him — that every imagination of the thoughts of their hearts has been only evil continually."<sup>7</sup> — And that nothing they can possibly do or suffer can remove their guilt, or in any degree lessen it. They will likewise shew them how very unfit they are for communion with God here, or the enjoyment of him hereafter: He being glorious in holiness and they wholly overspread with the leprosy of sin. They will

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likewise

<sup>6</sup> Matt. xvi 26.

<sup>7</sup> Gen. vi. 5.

likewise point out to them the dreadful danger they are in ; the wrath they are every moment exposed to ; “ the wrath of God which is revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men ; ” how very suddenly this may come upon them ; and how utterly impossible it is for them either to endure or escape it, unless they are pardoned and saved by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. They will assure them that this is the state and condition not only of those who are openly profane, but of others, whose characters are outwardly fair, and who are generally considered as sober moral people ; of all the sons and daughters of Adam without distinction, and of themselves in particular. Nor will they content themselves with barely telling them this ; but will labour to make them really sensible of it ; to rouse their consciences ; and make them feel their misery. Such plain dealings as these are not indeed always relished, but not only Scripture but common sense will convince us of the necessity of them. You recollect a very shocking accident that happened at a farm-house in this village a few years ago. Five or six vagrants, who were conveyed by a pass into the next county, were lodged in a small house erected for that purpose. In the night the house took fire, and the poor wretches were confined in it. Suppose one of you had been passing by and had seen the building in flames, and been apprehensive that the people were asleep in it, What would you have done ? Would you not have endeavoured to awaken them, and have cried out with all your might, Fire, Fire ? And would any body have blamed you for it ? Why, verily, so must Ministers do if they would save souls.—They see men surrounded by the flames of hell, and every

moment

moment in danger of being consumed by them ; and yet asleep in that dreadful situation. What must they do, if they would save them ? Undoubtedly they must do as you would have done, if you had been in the situation I have been mentioning. Those who are determined to sleep on in their sins may blame them ; but they will be enabled themselves to say with some confidence, That their hearts desire and prayer for them is, that they might be saved. They will likewise prove their sincerity,

3. By endeavouring to point out the deceitful nature of those Hopes which sinners are prone to entertain.

They well know that even those who are convinced of their sins are too apt to look for deliverance from a wrong quarter, and to build their hopes upon a false foundation ; and that if they should rest here, notwithstanding the concern they feel, and the pains they take, they will be inevitably undone. This, therefore, is what they labour all they can to prevent. Hence they will shew them the danger of trusting to an outward reformation, or superior knowledge, or warm devotion, or self-righteousness in whatever form, or any thing but the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus they will pursue them from one refuge of lies to another, till they have driven them to the only sure Refuge.

4. Their setting forth the Lord Jesus Christ as the only and the all-sufficient Saviour of sinners, and encouraging the most guilty and unworthy to rely upon him, will be a further proof of it.

They will point out the dignity of his person, and the greatness of his love ; they will point out the gracious errand on which he came into our world, to save the very

chief of sinners. They will shew his ability to save to the uttermost, and how he has magnified the law of God, and made it honourable ; so that God is just, whilst he is the Justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. They will declare that Jesus Christ is not only able to justify, but to sanctify ; to preserve them in life, to support them in death, and to make them happy to all eternity : So that if they have but an interest in him, they will be completely safe and happy. They will likewise shew the freeness of his Salvation, manifested in the love he has shewn, and the pleasure he takes in saving sinners ; the promises and invitations he has given in his Word, and the many singular instances of saving mercy there recorded. Thus they will give them sufficient ground to conclude, that notwithstanding all their great wickedness, there is still hope for them. And that though they have done evil as they could, yet they are encouraged to come to Christ ; and assured that, if they come, he will in no wise cast them out. They will endeavour to state the objections that convinced sinners may make, and shew how groundless they are. They will persuade and encourage them to come to Christ, and cast themselves at his feet, though they have long despised his Gospel, and refused to hear his voice.

They know from their own experience how needful all this is. They recollect how many difficulties stood in their own way of coming to the Saviour ; and are apprehensive that the same difficulties will lie in the way of others. And they know they are performing a very acceptable service to their great Master, in endeavouring to remove them ; as well as doing themselves the honour and giving themselves the pleasure of imitating his example. Nor can you in the least doubt that hereby they give proof



proof that they sincerely wish, and pray for the Salvation of those with whom they are conversant, while they thus take pains to shew them the way to it.

5. Their sincerity will further appear in the Language they use upon these important subjects.

This will be such as the poorest and most ignorant are able to understand. Should they speak in such language as can only gratify a refined taste, or deal in difficult and abstruse reasoning, such as can only be understood by great scholars, there would be too much reason to fear they aimed at their own gratification, or the applauses of the learned and polite, rather than the Salvation of their hearers: as they could not but know that the greater part of their hearers would reap no benefit from their discourses, however important and interesting they might appear to themselves to be. But he who sincerely labours for souls will, with Paul, use great plainness of speech, and determine not to know any thing save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

6. If Ministers really desire the Salvation of souls, it will farther appear from the Pains they take, and the Difficulties they encounter in order to accomplish it.

If men let slip the most obvious opportunities, yea if they do not seek opportunities; if they take little pains, or are deterred from exertions by difficulties, it cannot be supposed the object lies near their hearts. So if Ministers neglect any opportunity of instructing their people, either in public or in private; if they do not seek for opportunities of instructing; if in addition to their stated services on Lord's days, they do not endeavour to instruct

them on week days; if they do not add to their public preaching, private instructions, as often as they can, they give little evidence that the Salvation of souls is what they chiefly seek. Yea, if they are prevented from these services by the degrees of fatigue that may attend them; or, through the fear of reproach and persecution, proofs of their sincerity are wanting. You know what pains people will take to get worldly property; what fatigues the miser will undergo for gold, what hazards the soldier will run for victory, and all because their hearts are engaged. Such pains undoubtedly will a Minister take; such fatigue he will endure, and such hazards he will run, if his heart is but as thoroughly engaged in seeking the Salvation of souls. Thus, like Timothy, he will endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. And though he may, with Paul, be ready to say, "In every city bonds and afflictions abide me;" \* with the same Paul he will subjoin, "But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my course with joy, and the Ministry I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the Grace of God." †

7. Perseverance in these things is further requisite to manifest the sincerity of such a Minister.

He will not only warn men, but *continue* to warn them; not only tell them of their lost state by nature, but repeat the solemn truth again and again. He will not merely for once hold up Christ as the only, the able, the willing Saviour; but constantly exhibit him as such to poor sinners. He will not only preach the Gospel in one place, but labour to preach it in as many places as he can



He will not only for once endure fatigue and reproach, but constantly endure them. Like the labourer who is worn down with the labours of one day, rests at night, and engages in the same labours on the morrow. And though he might have laboured with little or no success, for a considerable time, which is the greatest discouragement a faithful Minister can meet with, yet will he not give the matter up, but renew his attempts, still "travailing in birth until Christ be formed in them." <sup>2</sup> This, this is the Minister who has a right to say, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved!" Once more,

8. He will live under the Influence of the doctrine he preaches.

Having been savingly enlightened by the Spirit of God, he has seen the importance of his *own Salvation*. He has been taught the depravity of his nature, and the insufficiency of his own righteousness to justify him before God. He has seen the suitableness of Christ as a Saviour, and believed in him for Salvation himself. He has seen the transcendent glory of the way of Salvation by Jesus Christ, and derived all his consolation and joy from it. He has felt its sanctifying influence, and has learned from his own experience, as well as exhibited in his own life and conversation, that "the Grace of God" "that bringeth Salvation appearing unto all men, teacheth them, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, they should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present world." This change he experienced before he commenced a Minister of the Gospel; and since he has entered into that sacred employ, he has constantly made it

his

his great concern to cultivate religion in his own soul, and to watch over his own conduct, lest he should act inconsistently with the doctrine he preaches. I could easily exemplify what I have said under this particular, in the experience and conduct of the Apostle Paul, whose words we have chosen for our text, would it not be trespassing too long upon your patience : I will therefore only desire you attentively to read over the account of his conversion, recorded in the ixth chapter of the Acts, and what he says of himself in the 1st chapter of his epistle to the Galatians, and the iiii chapter of his epistle to the Philippians,

That this is requisite to prove a Minister's sincerity in seeking your Salvation, is what you scarcely need be told. You cannot think that a man is in earnest, when he preaches to you, what he does not believe himself. You cannot imagine a man sincerely cares for your Salvation if he has no concern for his own. How can he from his heart warn you to fly from the wrath to come, if he has never fled from it himself ? How can he be believed to be in earnest in recommending a Saviour to you, whom he has not received himself ? How can he in truth urge the necessity of your living soberly, righteously, and godly, if he does not live so himself ? The important considerations we have been insisting on, under our first head, cannot be supposed to be greatly felt by any one that is himself an ungodly man : and if they could, he would be quickly convinced that his own bad example would completely defeat the design of his instructions.

This, then, is another very important evidence of sincerity, in seeking your salvation. The Minister must be a godly man himself, must exemplify in himself that faith

and holiness, which he professes to aim at promoting in you.

I readily grant, Brethren, that in what I have now said I have been teaching myself a very important lesson ; but I can, through divine Grace, freely declare to you, that it is a lesson I have long been endeavouring to learn ; and, whatever apprehensions you may justly entertain of some who sustain the name of Ministers, yet I doubt not but there are great numbers who can make a similar declaration. In this, however, we do not boast of ourselves ; but readily acknowledge, " It is by the Grace of God we are what we are."

But I must now proceed, in the

III<sup>d</sup>. place, to mention some things which may enable each Ministers to conclude that their desires and prayers are accomplished.

This cannot be a matter of indifference to them. When they see no ground to conclude that men reap any saving benefit from their labours, they feel a pain proportioned to the strength of their desires, and like Paul, " have great heaviness and continual sorrow in their hearts,"<sup>3</sup> and are compelled to exclaim in the language of the Prophet, " who hath believed our report?"<sup>4</sup> — But when they have reason to hope for the contrary, they rejoice as those who have found great spoil, and are comforted in all their tribulations, and recompensed for all their prayers and labours. Viewing the blessed fruits of their Ministry, they address them in the joyful accents of the same Apostle, " For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, be-  
" cause

<sup>3</sup> Rom. ix. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Isaiah liii. 1.

“ cause when ye received the word of God which ye heard  
 “ of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is  
 “ in truth the word of God, which also effectually work-  
 “ eth in you that believe. For what is our hope, or joy,  
 “ or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence  
 “ of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?” <sup>5</sup> —But  
 when may they be said to have this satisfaction?

To this I must reply in the general, when they have  
 reason to conclude that their hearers are *truly* converted,  
 and from the heart believe and obey the Gospel. And this  
 includes in it a conviction of the great importance of  
 their Salvation; a sense of their sinful, fallen, helpless  
 state and condition; and of the justness of God's leaving  
 them in that state, and punishing them for their sins:  
 Also a giving up of all hopes of pardon and life from any  
 thing they can do or suffer, and depending upon the mercy  
 of God, and the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ alone.  
 It also includes a receiving Christ Jesus, as their Saviour to  
 deliver them, and as their King to govern them; “ as their  
 “ wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption;” <sup>6</sup>  
 Looking for peace and comfort from his presence, and the  
 manifestations of his power and grace, and esteeming it  
 their honour to love and obey, and copy after him. If  
 they be truly converted they will “ yield themselves to  
 “ God, as those who are alive from the dead; being made  
 “ free from sin, and become the servants of righteousness,  
 “ they have their fruit unto holiness, and the end ever-  
 “ lasting life.” <sup>7</sup>

This is the Scripture account of conversion to God,  
 and of the nature and effects of that faith in our Lord  
 Jesus Christ, which is accompanied with Salvation. Such



an account as this the Apostle gives of himself in the 3d chapter to the Phillippians, where after speaking of his attainments and zeal in the Jewish Religion, he says, " But  
 " whatsoever things were gain to me, those I counted loss  
 " for Christ; yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss  
 " for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my  
 " Lord : for whom I have suffered the loss of all things,  
 " and do count them but dung that I may win Christ,  
 " and be found in Him ; not having mine own righteousness,  
 " which is of the law, but that which is of the faith  
 " of Christ, even the righteousness which is of God by  
 " faith." \* And it was on account of the want of this,  
 which was so visible in the Jewish Nation, that he entertained such painful apprehensions concerning them.—  
 Hence he says, " I bear them record that they have a zeal  
 " of God, but not according to knowledge. For they  
 " being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about  
 " to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted  
 " themselves unto the righteousness of God ?" †

It will be readily granted that as this work consists, in a great measure, in secret exercises of the heart, and as Ministers are unable to search the heart, they cannot pronounce infallibly concerning it in particular instances, but must content themselves with that kind of evidence that renders its existence probable. And this evidence in part arises from the account which such persons give of themselves, and the effects of the word upon their hearts. But, in addition to such an account, the following things are requisite to establish this hope, and indeed to render the account itself, which they give, worthy of credit.

1. Their

\* Phil. iii. 7, 8, 9.

† Rom. x. 2, 3.

## 1. Their forsaking their former sinful courses.—

Little hope can be entertained of the Salvation of any, whatever knowledge he may have, whatever professions he may make, or however constantly he may attend the means of grace, while he continues in the love and practice of sin. Whatever hopes he may cherish, he will be disappointed; and he ought not to be offended if a Minister address him in the language of Peter to Simon Magus, “ I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity; for thine heart is not right in the sight of God.”<sup>1</sup> But when in addition to the fore-mentioned profession, a person appears determined to break off his former sinful customs, forsakes his old sinful companions, and keeps out of the way of temptations; when he expresses an hearty abhorrence of his former wickedness—watches carefully against it, and earnestly prays to be kept from it, and thus practically says, “ What have I to do any more with idols?”<sup>2</sup> So far there is reason to hope that such a one is “ a brand plucked out of the fire.”<sup>3</sup> and that a Minister’s wishes and prayers are accomplished. So Paul entertained that hope of the Thessalonians, because it was visible, “ that they turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God.”<sup>4</sup>

2. Delight in attending the means of Grace. In reading their bibles, and other good books:—in praying to God in secret, or in company with their fellow Christians;—in hearing the Word preached;—and in Christian conversation. These are the means which God has appointed for carrying on his good work in the hearts of the converted; for manifesting the Lord Jesus Christ to them; for reproving, encouraging, comforting them; and when there

<sup>1</sup> Acts viii. 23.<sup>2</sup> Hosea xiv. 8.<sup>3</sup> Zec. iii. 2.<sup>4</sup> 1 Thess. i. 9.



there is a real work of Grace begun in the soul, there will of course be a great delight in them, and desire after them. They will be like food to the hungry and refreshment to the faint. And unless this delight be made manifest, the conversion of persons is justly questionable: and this delight cannot be made manifest, but by their constant attendance upon them, if it be in their power; by their taking pains and enduring fatigue, to attend them: and by attending them, though they may meet with opposition and reproach on that account. Oh could we but see many of this description! In them our warmest wishes would seem accomplished! However, I must not forget to observe that,

### 3. Perseverance is another requisite.

Some there are who for a time appear much concerned about their souls, make fair professions of what they have experienced, forsake their sinful practices, and seem to take much pleasure in religious exercises; yea and appear very zealous and forward in all this: but alas! soon their fervour begins to abate; they gradually sink into indifference, forsake secret prayer, grow less constant in their attendance upon the preaching of the Gospel, and willingly yield to excuses for absenting themselves. After a while they begin to tamper with seemingly little sins; and if they do not at length throw off the very form of godliness, they will retain little or nothing more than the form. Such lamentable instances of drawing back almost every where occur; and then whatever hopes might have been entertained of them in their better days, yet now these hopes must be given up. So the Apostle Paul, notwithstanding the zeal the Galatians once discovered, was compelled by their back-sliding, to assure them, " That he

“ stood in doubt of them.” <sup>5</sup> But when those who profess to embrace the Gospel ; who forsake their sins, and discover a warm attachment to the institutions of Religion, hold on in such a course, notwithstanding the temptations with which they are surrounded, and the self-denial to which they are exposed, our hope of them is steadfast. So the Apostle Paul’s joyful prospects respecting the Thessalonians, already mentioned, sprang from the report which Timothy brought him of their steadfastness. “ For  
 “ this cause when I could no longer forbear, I sent to  
 “ know your faith, lest by some means the Tempter have  
 “ tempted you, and our labour be in vain. But now  
 “ when Timothy came from you unto us, and brought  
 “ us good tidings of your faith and charity ; and that ye  
 “ have good remembrance of us, desiring greatly to see  
 “ us, as we also to see you : Therefore, Brethren, we  
 “ were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith : for now we live, if ye stand fast  
 “ in the Lord.” <sup>6</sup>

But, having drawn out this subject to so great a length, I must now conclude with a brief improvement. From what has been said then, you may,

1. Learn who those Ministers are whom you ought to hear.

It is of great importance for you to determine this. The profit of your own souls is here greatly concerned. “ If the blind lead the blind,” you know what will be the consequence, “ both will fall into the ditch.” <sup>7</sup> And if on the other hand, you reject the doctrine, and oppose  
 the

the efforts of those who are the true Ministers of Jesus Christ, you oppose Jesus Christ himself, who hath said, "He that rejecteth you rejecteth me." \* On this account, therefore, you ought to labour to distinguish who such Ministers are. Now, the subject we have been insisting upon will enable you to determine. They are those Ministers whose desire and prayer it is that you might be saved; and who give such proofs of their sincerity as we have been mentioning. It signifies little, comparatively, whether he be a Church Minister, or a Presbyterian, or an Independent, or a Baptist, or a Methodist, (though in these things you will do well to follow that denomination which you think comes nearest to the standard set you in the New Testament.) But is he one who seeks your Salvation? and who uses right methods to accomplish it? This is the question. If he only preach to get a livelihood, or to gain applause; if instead of telling you of your sin and misery, and directing you to Jesus Christ as the only Saviour, he flatter you with a hope that you are already safe, or that you only need to live sober and decent lives, in order to obtain Salvation; if instead of addressing you with plainness and faithfulness, he speak a language you cannot understand; if instead of labouring as much, and preaching as often as he can, he preach to you but once on a Lord's day, and dispatch that business in as short a space of time as possible; if, in a word, he be not a godly man himself, an example of Faith, of Patience, of Charity, of the influence of the doctrine he preaches; but, on the contrary, a covetous man, a drunkard, a swearer, or a debauchee: if, I say, he be a person of such a description, you ought to shun him "as a wolf in sheep's clothing,"<sup>9</sup> let him belong to which denomination he

\* Luke x. 16.

<sup>9</sup> Matt. viii. 13.

he may. But if he sincerely aim to save your souls ; if he seek not yours, but you ; if he preach not himself, but Christ Jesus the Lord ; and if he travail in birth till Christ be formed in you ; he is justly entitled to your esteem and attention, under whatever name he may go, or whatever talents he may possess.

2. You may also learn the regards you owe to such a Minister. If he come to you, and labour for you, with a view to your soul's everlasting welfare, certainly you ought not to use him ill. If he take pains, and undergo great fatigue to come and preach the Gospel of Salvation to you, you ought not to think it too much trouble to come and hear him. If he endure reproach and persecution in coming to labour for you, as is sometimes the case, you should not be kept from attending on his Ministry through fear of reproach. He makes a greater sacrifice than you ; and remember it is not his, but your advantage that he seeks. And though he may often deal very plainly with you, in telling you of your sinfulness, and setting before you the awful estate you are in ; in describing to you the terrors of the great Judgment day, and the miseries of the damned in Hell, and in urging you to fly from the wrath to come ; you certainly should not be displeased with him, or think he hates you. He does not delight in saying these awful things himself ; but says them because he is convinced they are necessary to awaken you to a sense of your danger, and to prevail upon you to escape that place of torment. You are not angry with a Surgeon because he may give you great pain in setting a broken limb, when you are convinced he does it with a view to the preservation of your life. When the true Ministers of Christ meet with unkind and cruel treatment, they are pained to think that they have a right



right to console themselves in the declaration of Enoch of old, who prophesied, "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him." And would rather say, with their great Master, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do!" Once more,

8. You may learn from what has been said, how earnestly you should labour and pray for your own Salvation.

This was one principal object I had in view in insisting so long on that branch of our subject. I presume you felt convinced from what was there advanced, that Ministers ought to be very earnest in seeking the Salvation of their Hearers. You are convinced they would act very inconsistently and cruelly, were they not to do it. But if so, ought not you to be in earnest in seeking your own Salvation? Will you not be chargeable with the greatest possible folly and cruelty to yourselves, not to seek your own Salvation? And here suffer me just to repeat the particulars already enlarged upon, and shew how directly they apply to you. Shall Ministers long and pray for your Salvation on account of the great blessedness you will enjoy if you are saved; and is this blessedness nothing to you? Have the pardon of your sins, the peace of your consciences, the joys of Heaven, laurels of victory, and crowns of glory, no charms with you? Will you be content to see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of their Father, and you yourselves shut out? Shall they long and pray for your Salvation



Salvation on account of the misery you must otherwise inevitably endure; and is this consideration nothing to you? Are the terrors of conscience a trifle? Is the wrath of the great God that made the universe not worth dreading? Is Hell with all its horrors, the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched; where they have no rest day nor night, but the smoke of their torment ascendeth for ever and ever; is Hell, I say, a tolerable place? Are they pained that the Gospel and all its privileges should only serve to render your sins and misery the more aggravated; render your state at the Day of Judgment worse than that of Sodom; and is this a light thing to you? Will not the punishment of Sodom be sufficiently dreadful? Will you run the hazard of enduring a punishment more dreadful? Has the Glory of Christ in your Salvation a material influence upon them; and shall it have none upon you? Has he suffered so little already that you are determined, if possible, to crucify him again, and tear open his wounds afresh? In fine, Do they tremble at the thought that you are fast hastening to the dreadful precipice of Death, from whence, if you miss of Salvation, you will instantaneously be plunged into eternal ruin, and shall you be quite easy in such a rapid course? The things that belong to your peace are swiftly receding from your view, and will you be unconcerned whether you know them ere your day draw to a close, and they be for ever hid from your eyes? "Behold, now is the accepted time! behold, now is the day of Salvation!" 2

May

May the God of all Grace grant that these dear immortal souls may for the future make it their hearts desire and prayer to God that they may be saved, and speedily have their desires accomplished and their prayer answered !

FINIS.

THE TIME OF JACOB'S TROUBLE

AND THE  
MANNER OF HIS DELIVERANCE  
... for the purpose of their deliverance  
... to God ... and finally  
... their deliverance accomplished and their prayer an-  
swered!

# SERMON

PREACHED AT

... the County of ...

... 18...

... OF THE

DEATH OF ... JAMES DYER.



BY WILLIAM STEADMAN

... 18...

... ADDRESS ...

... 18...

... 18...

... JAMES DYER ...  
... 18...